



Inspiring people to explore the archaeology, history and environment of Wiltshire

COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

2024-2029

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Document History and Review

Name of museum: *Wiltshire Museum, Devizes*

Name of governing body: *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Collections Trust*

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: *May 2024*

First version approved 13 May 2005. Amendments incorporated: 9 December 2005, 28 October 2006, 7 July 2011. 8 August 2014. February 2020.

Policy review procedure: The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. It will be published on the Museum website.

Date at which this policy is due for review: *2029.*

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

**This document follows the template developed by Arts Council England
Issued in July 2014 (reprinted in November 2018).**

Introduction

The collections displayed and cared for by the Wiltshire Museum are owned by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Collections Trust (Charity Number -1080096). The museum is managed by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (WANHS) as one of its functions. The Society was founded in Devizes in 1853.

The Collections Development Policy set out in this document is intended to serve as a guide to the Company (WANHS) acting as corporate trustee for the WANHS Collection Trust, the curatorial staff, and volunteers of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society and potential donors to the Collections Trust. Its purpose is to ensure that the Trust's collections grow in a structured rather than an indiscriminate way, that efficient use is made of the Society's resources and that the public receive the best possible benefit in terms of lifelong learning and enjoyment through the collection, preservation, and interpretation of this part of the county's heritage. It ensures too that the development of neighbouring museums is not prejudiced.

This document consists of a general policy applicable to the Collections Trust, and specific policies relating to different sections of the collections - archaeology, recent history, numismatics, the natural sciences, art, photographs, postcards, paper archives and printed books.

I. Relationship to other relevant policies / plans of the organisation:

I.1 The museum's statement of purpose is (updated in 2019):

The objects for which the Society is registered are *to educate the public by promoting, fostering interest in, exploration, research and publication on the archaeology, art, history, and natural history of Wiltshire for the public benefit.* To achieve this the Society:

- Maintains a museum, library, and art gallery, open throughout the year, and mounts exhibitions to stimulate and enhance appreciation of the county of Wiltshire.
- Actively collects objects and documents, through the Collections Trust, that tell the story of Wiltshire.
- Organises lectures, conferences, and visits to disseminate greater knowledge and appreciation of our heritage, to both the Society's members and wider audience.
- Provides activities for young people to enable them to appreciate and develop their understanding of the local environment and its history (including school visits to the Museum and workshops at schools).
- Engages with local community groups to offer arts, culture, and heritage activities for all generations.
- Provides opportunities for volunteers, without whom the Society could not offer the scale and variety of activities.
- Promotes, encourages, and undertakes research and publishes newsletters, an annual magazine, reports, periodicals, books, and other literature which are relevant to its activities.
- Operates an archaeological field group which encourages members to become involved actively in archaeology in the county.

- Committees and working groups are formed to follow up on specific issues.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift or bequest, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

The Wiltshire Museum is run by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (WANHS), an independent charity founded in Devizes in 1853. The Society was founded by a group of Wiltshire gentlemen following the acquisition of the John Britton library of topographical and antiquarian books and manuscripts. The inaugural meeting resolved to form a society 'to cultivate and collect information on archaeology and natural history in their various branches and to form a library and museum illustrating the history, natural, civic and ecclesiastic of the County of Wilts'.

The Society held exhibitions in various buildings in the town, before moving to the former Grammar School in 1873 and building a new entrance hall before opening in 1874. It acquired adjoining Georgian town houses in 1903 and 1943 and opened a new art gallery extension in 1980.

Over the last 171 years, the Society has built a membership of over 1,000 members and its collections are Designated by Government as being of national significance. The most important is the early Bronze Age 'Stourhead Collection', namely the objects and archives of the excavations undertaken by William Cunnington over 200 years ago, mostly in the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site.

3. An overview of current collections

Archaeology Collection (before 1600 AD)

The archaeology collection is the most important part of all the collections. It is extensive, numbering an estimated 45,000 items (bulk finds from archaeological assemblages counted as one item), and wide ranging in its scope, covering all periods of human history in Wiltshire. The great strength of the collection lies in its prehistoric material, in particular that of Neolithic to Iron Age date.

The archaeology collection includes the finds from over 750 excavations in Wiltshire, the most significant of which are from the hundred or so early Bronze Age barrows excavated in the early 19th century by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington I. This collection is known as the Stourhead Collection.

The early Bronze Age collection is of exceptional importance because of its size and range; the uniqueness of many of the objects; the fact that it includes many prestige items, including objects made of gold, amber, jet and shale; its association with the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, and its relevance to the history of archaeology. A selection of the collection was most recently published in, *Ritual in Early Bronze Age Grave Goods: An examination of ritual and dress equipment from Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age graves in England*. J Hunter and A Woodward, 2015.

The objects from archaeological excavations are complemented by casual finds, again of all periods, including items declared as 'treasure' under the Treasure Act (1996).

Recent History Collection (post 1600 AD)

The recent history collection numbers around 10,000 items and focuses on life in the district formerly known as Kennet, since 1600.

Kennet was a non-metropolitan local government district in Wiltshire, which was abolished as part of structural changes to local government in 2009. For the purposes of this document the term 'Kennet District' continues to refer to this geographical area. As 'districts' have only existed as political areas since 1974, inevitably the museum holds items acquired in the more distant past from elsewhere in Wiltshire. It also holds some classes of object which relate to all of Wiltshire.

The main subject areas are local trades and industries, domestic items, education, law and order, agriculture, personalia and sport. The collection includes several individual items of particular significance. The strength of the collection lies in the objects relating to the history of Devizes (which links to the Devizes collection in the archive and library) and Avebury parish.

A more recent addition to the recent history collection is the Wiltshire Life Society Collection, transferred to the Collections Trust from the Lackham Museum of Agriculture and Rural Life Trust in 2010. The collection was previously on display in the Great Barn at Avebury until 2000. The collection includes 650 agricultural items and a library of 400 related books and 400 photographs. The collection was transferred with funding for its long-term care.

Numismatics Collection

The collection numbers around 30,000 coins, medallions, tokens, banknotes and related items. It consists chiefly of coins found in Wiltshire and coins etc which were either struck in Wiltshire or which refer to Wiltshire people, places or events. There is also a small general collection of Roman and English coins. The first group includes coin hoards deposited between the Iron Age and Civil War period, and assemblages of coins from the excavations of archaeological sites and stray finds of coins. The second group includes Saxon and Norman coins struck at Wiltshire mints; tokens of different types issued in Wiltshire from the 17th century; banknotes etc. issued by local banks and medallions relating to the county. There are a number of unique items. The strength of the collection lies in the comparatively large number of Iron Age coins, the scope of its collection of Wiltshire tokens, medallions and banknotes and, in provincial terms, the size of its Roman coin collection.

Natural Sciences Collection

The natural sciences collection was mainly donated by individual botanists and geologists, although Salisbury, Swindon and Trowbridge museums hold small collections of locally found fossils. The collection numbers around 25,000 specimens from the whole of Wiltshire. The Geology collection contains over 6,000 fossils with representative specimens from every rock type in the county. Of particular importance are the Greensand and Chalk fossils donated by William Cunnington III, most of whose collection was given to the Natural History Museum, London, in 1906.

On the botanical side the museum houses a Society Flora started by T B Flower and T A Preston in 1870 which now contains around 3,000 specimens, collected up to 1966. The 'Grose Herbarium' consists of 9,000 sheets of fully documented pressed plant specimens collected by Donald Grose while he was writing *The Flora of Wiltshire*. Another important holding is the collection of lichens and bryophytes assembled by Francis Rose.

Animal bones, plant remains etc. from archaeological excavations in Wiltshire are considered in the Archaeology and Recent History Collections above.

Art Collection

The art collection comprises original watercolours, drawings, oil paintings, prints and engravings, amounting to approximately 10,000 works in total. The collection consists primarily of works by Wiltshire artists, who were either born in or have other associations with Wiltshire; and works depicting Wiltshire subjects. There are a small number of paintings which are associated with significant people from Wiltshire. The art collection covers the work of most of the topographical artists who have worked in the west of England since 1750. It also has close links with the archaeological collection, with for example numerous views of Stonehenge and Avebury and other archaeological monuments and paintings by archaeologists and historians such as Sir Richard Colt Hoare, John Britton and Denis Grant King. A selection of the collection was published in Richard Hatchwell's *Art in Wiltshire* (2005); the Public Catalogue Foundation's volume of *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership: Gloucestershire & Wiltshire* (2011); *The Watercolour World* – showcasing online 1,400 watercolour pictures from the art collection (2019).

The strength of the collection lies in its topographical collection which includes nearly 600 watercolours of Wiltshire churches and other buildings by John Buckler from almost every Wiltshire parish, as well as its collection of works relating to archaeology, including the watercolour drawings of archaeological objects made by Philip Crocker which served as the originals for engravings in Sir Richard Colt Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire*.

This section of the policy now excludes the collections of printed and manuscript maps and photographs, which should be considered as part of the archive and library collections below.

Archive and Library Collections

The archive and library collections are one of the largest and last surviving independent county repositories in the UK, numbering approximately 38,000 items (bulk accessioned where appropriate). The collection originates from the acquisition of the John Britton library of topographical and antiquarian books and manuscripts and the subsequent founding of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in 1853. Appropriate archival documents were transferred to the Wiltshire Record Office after it was created, over 100 years later and are now held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

It is primarily a local studies collection of books, journals, newspapers, and other printed items including photographs, postcards and maps relating to Wiltshire. There is also a document collection consisting of both printed material and original manuscripts.

The collection has a separate archaeology section which includes a general collection of archaeology books, the principal archaeology journals, papers of Wiltshire antiquaries and the written records of more recent excavations in the county. The natural history section similarly includes general natural history books, specialist journals and the papers of early natural historians. These complement the museum collections. There is also a smaller general history collection. As well as reference books on art history and decorative art there are several individual unique items in the library.

Particularly important areas of the collection include the papers and annotated books by early antiquaries and historians such as William Stukeley, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and William Cunnington I, as well as the collection of printed ephemera and the extensive range of national and county journals.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Archaeology Collection (before 1600 AD):

The Collections Trust collects archaeology covering all periods of human history in Wiltshire, prioritising the collection of prehistoric material, in particular that of Neolithic to Iron Age date.

Collecting Area

Originally the museum collected archaeological items from the whole of Wiltshire. Since 1960 this has been qualified by agreements made with other Wiltshire museums, as follows:-

- **Salisbury Museum**

In west Wiltshire, the Collections Trust will acquire archaeological objects found north of Grid Line 46 and in central and eastern Wiltshire, north of the boundary between the former Salisbury and Kennet District Councils, which merged into the unitary authority of Wiltshire Council in 2009.

- **Swindon Museum and Art Gallery**

The Collections Trust will not collect finds made in the Borough of Swindon.

- **Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury**

The Collections Trust will not acquire archaeological finds made within the Avebury World Heritage Site. **This is a revision of the 2014-19 Collections Development Policy and has been agreed by both Wiltshire Museum and the Alexander Keiller Museum. Prior to this, the Collections Trust collected archaeological material in the geographical area of the World Heritage Site, outside the parish boundary.*

- **Trowbridge Museum**

Since the Collections Development Policy was last published in 2014, Trowbridge Museum has ceased collecting archaeology archives, and as a result, the Collections Trust now collects archaeological finds made in the parishes of Trowbridge, Hilperton and Staverton (as of 2020).

- **Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre**

The Collections Trust will not collect archaeological finds from the parishes of Chippenham Within, Chippenham Without and Langley Burrell.

The Collections Trust will collect archaeological finds, including items from excavations and surface collections and individual finds from the defined collecting area. This is:

North Wiltshire: all parishes excluding Chippenham Within, Chippenham Without and Langley Burrell. Swindon Museum collect finds made in the Borough of Swindon.

Kennet: all parishes [excluding the Avebury World Heritage Site].

West Wiltshire: the parishes of Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall, Atworth, Broughton Gifford, Melksham, Melksham Without, Limpley Stoke, Winsley, Bradford on Avon, Holt, Semington, Trowbridge, Hilperton, Staverton, Westwood, Great Hinton, Wingfield, Steeple Ashton, Keevil, Bulkington, Southwick, North Bradley, West Ashton, Steeple Ashton, Edington, Coulston, Heywood, Bratton, Chapmanslade, Upton Scudamore, and the north parts of the parishes of Corsley, Westbury, Warminster, Bishopstrow, Norton Bavant, Heytesbury, Knook and Chitterne.

It will also accept written excavation archives from these areas, whether or not the intervention has provided a finds archive.

Qualifications

In accordance with the general policy, in exceptional circumstances, the Collections Trust may collect finds from archaeological sites in Wiltshire lying outside the defined collecting area:

- i. If it already holds the finds from an earlier excavation there, such as a barrow excavated by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington I.
- ii. If the relevant museum does not wish to acquire them and it is felt that the objects have an archaeological significance or are important for display purposes or to fill a gap in the collection. This may include items declared 'treasure' under the Treasure Act (1996).

'Private collections' of archaeological finds will only be accepted when the objects were found within the defined collecting area or when the collector is closely associated with the collecting area. It should consider accepting such private collections *in toto*. When, however, a substantial part of it comes from outside the collecting area, it should carefully consider a rational division of the collection with other museums which may be concerned. ('Private Collections' should only be so classed when they are 'historic', i.e. were assembled before 1970 or are associated with a person of some significance or distinction.)

Recent History Collection (post 1600 AD):

The Collections Trust continues to acquire recent history items relating to life in the Kennet District since 1600 AD, which are considered useful for display or research on central Wiltshire, in particular in the town of Devizes and Avebury parish. The main subject areas include local trades and industries, domestic items, education, law and order, agriculture, personalia and sport. These items may be a part of post-

medieval excavation assemblage, chance archaeological finds, or individual items given to or purchased by the museum.

Collecting Area

Following the publication of the Wiltshire Council paper 'Collecting Policies for Local History in Wiltshire Museums' it is agreed that the primary collecting area for Wiltshire Museum is the Kennet District, but that items from Market Lavington parish should go to Market Lavington Museum.

Qualifications

In accordance with the general policy, in exceptional circumstances the Collections Trust may, with the agreement of the local museum, acquire items from outside the collecting area where it already holds strong collections of the same type of object from the whole of Wiltshire or if they have little relevance or value to the local museum and would enhance the existing collections at Wiltshire Museum.

The Collections Trust will in general not collect Industrial Archaeology material as it lacks sufficient storage and display space. However, it will attempt to build up a small representative collection of items made by or connected with industries in the Kennet District.

The Collections Trust will not at present form a general collection of costume and clothing as the Wiltshire Museum lacks suitable storage and display space. Costume with a particular local relevance, such as uniforms from the Kennet District will be acquired.

The Collections Trust will not at present form a general collection of militaria or of items associated with the Wiltshire Regiment. It will, however, acquire military items associated with local Volunteers or which relate to particular people in the Kennet District.

The Collections Trust will not at present collect fine and applied art objects with no specific connection with Wiltshire. It will collect, however, examples of the work of artists and craftsmen who were either born in Wiltshire or otherwise have been associated with the County, as well as works which, although neither made by a Wiltshire artist or craftsman nor depicting a Wiltshire subject, nevertheless have a close relationship with the County. They might, for example, have been used in Wiltshire or come from an important Wiltshire private collection.

On behalf of the Collections Trust the Curator will regularly report to the Curator of the Alexander Keiller Museum new recent history acquisitions which relate to the parish of Avebury.

Numismatics Collection:

The Collections Trust continues to acquire coins, medallions, tokens, banknotes, and related items found in Wiltshire and coins etc which were either struck in Wiltshire or which refer to Wiltshire people, places or events, from the excavations of archaeological sites and stray finds. The Collections Trust prioritises the collections of Iron Age, Roman and Medieval coins (including hoards) and 17th century Wiltshire tokens, medallions and banknotes issued by local banks and medallions relating to the county.

Collecting Area

For locally found items where the importance is primarily archaeological, the Collections Trust will follow the guidelines set out above in Archaeology Collections. For 'Wiltshire items', the collecting area shall cover the whole of Wiltshire. For medals and other awards, the collecting area shall be the Kennet District to conform to the Recent History Collections policy above.

The Collections Trust will collect:-

- Coins and other numismatic items found in Wiltshire in the collecting areas defined above in Archaeology Collections.
- Coins, tokens, commemorative medals, and banknotes issued in Wiltshire or otherwise associated with the county.
- Unprovenanced Roman and English coins for the general reference collection.
- War medals and other awards to people associated with the Kennet District, to conform with the collecting policy for Recent History Collections.

Qualifications

Because of the high cost in purchasing early medieval coins, care will be taken not to purchase duplicates of Wiltshire mint coins of which identical examples are also preserved in other Wiltshire museums.

The Collections Trust will not form general collections of other series such as foreign coins, and tokens and medallions with no Wiltshire connection.

The Collections Trust will not form a general collection of war medals or medals awarded to soldiers of the Wiltshire Regiment.

Care will be taken not to acquire banking history items which would be more appropriately housed in the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

Natural Sciences Collection:

Because of the shortage of appropriate storage space for the natural sciences collection, very few acquisitions have been made since 1980. This policy in consequence should be seen as either historic or hypothetical. If new storage space were to become available, the collecting policy for natural science items could be reconsidered.

Collecting Area

Botanical, zoological and geological material should be collected from the entire county. Fossils, however, should be collected from the whole county, but with consideration for the requirements of the other Wiltshire museums, including Salisbury, Swindon and Trowbridge, as outlined in Section 3.

The Collections Trust may collect:-

- Botany, including voucher material of 'new' species collected by the Wiltshire Flora Mapping Project and Lichen Mapping Project, plus Bryophytes and Fungi.
- Zoology, including vertebrates, birds eggs, molluscs and insects.
- Geology, including fossils, rocks, minerals and building stones from Wiltshire, and building stones used in but not originating from Wiltshire.
- General collections relating to the interests of early geologists, botanists etc. associated with Wiltshire.
- Individual natural science specimens of historic importance, such as early locally-mounted animals and birds.

Qualifications

Birds' eggs should be accepted only when they are particularly good collections with adequate documentation.

'Foreign' i.e. non-Wiltshire specimens should only be accepted when there is a strong Wiltshire connection, e.g. they come from an important Wiltshire collection.

Material stored in spirits or other inflammable liquid will not be collected because of the special storage requirements of flammable substances.

Art Collection:

The Collections Trust continues to acquire works depicting Wiltshire subjects and works by Wiltshire artists, who were either born in or have other associations with Wiltshire.

The Collections Trust prioritises the collection of items in the following categories:-

- Paintings and drawings and printed works which illustrate the topography of Wiltshire, including country scenes, town scenes, studies of individual ancient monuments, including Stonehenge and Avebury, and other archaeological sites and studies of individual buildings or groups of buildings across the county.
- Paintings and drawings and printed works depicting people closely associated with Wiltshire e.g. they were either born in or have worked in the county.
- Works by significant artists who are closely associated with Wiltshire, e.g. they were either born in or have worked in the county.
- Works associated with significant people in Wiltshire or from significant private collections from Wiltshire.

Collecting Area

The Collections Trust continues to collect from the whole of Wiltshire, with a focus on the World Heritage Site of Stonehenge and Avebury, the Kennet District and Devizes.

Qualifications

The Collections Trust will only collect outside the areas listed above after consultation with Salisbury Museum and from Swindon and from the collecting areas of the other leading museums in the county in deference to the collecting policies of those museums. With regard to Stonehenge, there shall be liaison with Salisbury Museum, which also collects Stonehenge material.

Archive and Library Collections:

The Collections Trust continues to collect original manuscripts, books, journals, newspapers, and other printed items including photographs, postcards, and maps, relating to the archaeology and history of Wiltshire. Priorities for collection include the papers and annotated books by early antiquaries and historians, the collection of printed ephemera and the extensive range of national and county journals. We will liaise with the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre on the acquisition of primary documentary material as items may be more appropriately deposited with them.

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the Collections Trust will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

Collecting Area

This policy defines the categories of material, books or other printed articles, and manuscript items which the Collections Trust will seek to acquire. The sections are not in order of importance. New books will be acquired with appropriate consideration of the collecting policy in particular the Local Studies Collection, Swindon Central Library and the Wiltshire County Library Service and the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. The strength and integrity of the archive and library collection must, however, be maintained and developed. Not all Wiltshire items will be collected: books etc. will be acquired only if they have a historical or natural history content. Emphasis will always be given to areas of the collections in which the archive and library collection is particularly strong, or which are not covered by other libraries in Wiltshire.

Local History

This is certainly the most widely used area in the archive and library collections and it is important that the Collections Trust attempt to keep this section as complete as possible. Acquisitions of new books will be based upon the Wiltshire lists published monthly by the Wiltshire Council and upon other publisher's lists. The following classes will be collected: -

- Printed books, articles, and pamphlets as well as typescripts and manuscripts relating to Wiltshire subjects at every level - places, persons, buildings, events, customs etc.
- Personal working notes relating to Wiltshire subjects as above, including the Victoria County History.
- Catalogues of the sales of Wiltshire houses or collections of books, pictures and artefacts formed by Wiltshire people.
- The Collections Trust will collect only on a very selective basis local history books relating to non-Wiltshire areas; these will be restricted to counties lying very close to Wiltshire.
- The Collections Trust will collect selectively reports by official bodies in Wiltshire, planning documents, town guides and other publications of current relevance which will acquire historical importance in the fullness of time.

Local Authors

The following classes may be collected selectively: -

- Books, articles, and poetry by authors with a close connection with Wiltshire.
- Books and articles about Wiltshire authors.

Ephemera

- The Collections Trust will actively collect printed ephemera including posters, handbills, guides and church magazines relating to Wiltshire subjects at every level.

Archaeology

The following will be collected: -

- Books about archaeological sites in Wiltshire or archaeological finds made in Wiltshire.
- Books on British and European archaeology required to appreciate the archaeology of Wiltshire.
- Reference works on archaeological artefacts and other excavated items, and classes of archaeological sites.
- Reference books on archaeological techniques (excavation, photography etc.).
- Biographies of archaeologists and antiquaries closely connected with Wiltshire.

- Manuscripts relating to Wiltshire archaeologists and antiquaries or to archaeological sites in Wiltshire.
- The written archives from more recent archaeological excavations.

Natural Sciences

The following books will be collected: -

- Books on past or present species or habitats found in Wiltshire.

The following books may be collected, in liaison with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust: -

- Major reference works covering Western Europe.

Maps

The Collections Trust will collect printed Wiltshire maps of all or part of the county. Manuscript maps will not normally be collected, as these should usually be housed in the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

Contemporary Collecting:

The Collections Trust actively engages in Contemporary Collecting to capture a snapshot of what is new, what is changing and what is happening now. As with all additions to the permanent collection, when considering acquiring contemporary material the above collecting themes and criteria will be met.

The Wessex Museums Contemporary Collecting Strategy was implemented in 2020. The Museum is a member of the Wessex Museums Partnership.

Contemporary Collecting is the collecting of objects and stories that reflect the recent past and what is happening today. Usually covering the past 50 years from the date collecting is being undertaken, there are two main ways that contemporary material can be acquired. Passive collecting through offers of donations is one way, but to get a more comprehensive understanding of modern-day life, active and collaborative types of collecting in the form of coordinated projects are usually more effective. Contemporary collecting means acquiring new material, to fill the gaps identified in existing collections. It also helps to future-proof collections for as-yet-unknown exhibitions and research projects, therefore ensuring that museums remain relevant to and representative of their audiences. A great benefit of contemporary collecting is that the histories fall within living memory, so can be documented with insights from those who experienced them first-hand. This provides museums with the opportunity to work in partnership with other people and communities, to be creative, dynamic, and inclusive.

Decolonising Collections:

The Collections Trust is firmly and consistently on the path to decolonisation, with meaningful, effective, and collaborative public engagement at its heart. Through this important work, we want to fully understand the stories of those who have been oppressed and understand where there are connections to our collections - whether it be related to the empire, or by more recent prejudices conveyed by the bias of curators and historians. We also want to tell honest stories about how objects have come to be in the museums - who they were given by and how and why the museums decided to accept them.

The Wessex Museums Decolonising Collections Framework was implemented in 2023. The Museum is a member of the Wessex Museums Partnership.

Decolonising involves creatively reimagining the way museums work, who they work with and what they value. It covers all areas of practice and creates a framework to better support people and institutions. Decolonising is a collective activity, which can be messy, thoughtful, imaginative, and emotional. It is driven by the desire for justice

and equity in that it aims to rebalance power and representation away from the coloniser narrative of history and society. This work is intersectional, as it challenges structural inequalities across the board to redress forms of historic and ongoing harm. Museums Association. Decolonising Practice. 2022.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

Archaeology Collection: the status of general finds in store may be subject to rationalisation to create storage space. Many of our historic archives include material that would not now be retained if current selection and retention policies had been implemented by the excavators. Examples include the retention of unstratified material, unprocessed environmental samples, or undiagnostic building materials. Any rationalisation will be carried out under professional supervision as part of a planned programme, approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Collections Trust will not be rationalising the **Recent History, Natural Sciences, Numismatics and Art Collections** as it is relevant within the terms of this policy.

Archive and Library Collection: in the same way as the museum, the archive and library have a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the public in relation to its stated objectives listed above in Section 4. Unlike the museum however there are accepted circumstances when the disposal of certain books or other items in the archive and library collection might be fully justified.

Examples of these are:

- When it has been replaced by a duplicate which, for example, might be in better condition.
- When it has been revised and re-printed and it is not considered necessary to retain earlier editions
- When improvements in our knowledge have shown that the content of it is either incorrect or too trivial to justify its retention and there are no other reasonable grounds to retain it.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

- Salisbury Museum
- Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
- Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre
- Trowbridge Museum
- The Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury
- Museums in the Wiltshire Councils Museum Advisory Service
- Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre
- Local Studies Collection, Swindon Central Library
- Young Gallery, Salisbury

The Collections Trust is committed to the principle that excavated finds from individual excavations or other interventions, and casual finds from individual archaeological sites should as far as possible be housed together at one museum and not divided between different museums.

8. Archival holdings

Our Archive holding is managed alongside our object collections, and are dealt with in the relevant sections in this Collections Development Policy.

9. Acquisition

The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

All acquisitions are subject to the provisions of this Collections Development Policy.

9.1.2 Offers of gifts to the Museum may be accepted by any member of the Curatorial team. Any query will be referred to the Curator for decision.

9.1.3 Any item that is being considered for purchase will initially be discussed with the Director. The Director may approve any purchase where the cost is below the current delegation level to the Director (£500), subject to available funds. All purchases above this level will be agreed by the Board of the Collections Trust. If a decision is required in the period before the next scheduled Board meeting, then the purchase may be agreed by the Chairman and reported to the next Board meeting.

9.1.4 Any item that is being offered for loan for will initially be discussed with the Director. All loans will be agreed by the Board of the Collections Trust. If a decision is required in the period before the next scheduled Board meeting, then the loan may be agreed by the Chairman and reported to the next Board meeting.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national

guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13. Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoliation

14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum

will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

16. Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

16.2 The Society Trust Deed dated 1859 states that 'any person contributing books or specimens to the museum should be at liberty to resume possession of them in the event of the property of the Society ever being sold or transferred otherwise than to a similar society in the county'. Museum objects that have been donated to the collections must therefore be offered back to the original donor or their heirs. The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or as a last resort - destruction.

16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities, and others served by the museum will also be sought.

16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites.

16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no

expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

16.10 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.

16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

Disposal by exchange

16.12 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Disposal by destruction

16.13 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

16.14 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

16.15 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

16.16 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

16.17 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

16.18 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

The information in this document is cross referenced in the Guidelines and Conditions for the Preparation and Deposition of Archaeological Archives to Wiltshire Museum, Devizes (latest revision December 2023)

Lisa Brown
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Wiltshire Museum
15th May 2024